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Secondary Mates

Secondary husbands and secondary wives were called *pekio*. *Pekio* came to a woman or a man only upon the mutual consent of both *ahana* and *vehine*. Male *pekio* were numerous in chiefs' households and were common in all families. On the other hand, it appears that female *pekio* were very rare even in chiefs' households. Garcia (14, p. 111) writes that he knew of only one example of polygamy. Stewart states (26, p. 317) that he had never heard of a man's having two wives, but that "for one woman to have two husbands is a universal habit." I know, however, of a man on Hiva Oa who had three wives at the same time. There appear to have been two reasons for the more frequent plurality of husbands; first, the fact that men greatly outnumbered women and, secondly, that the chief purpose in the *pekio institution* was to obtain assistance in work. Assistant male workers were required and were of much more value in the Marquesas than females. The principal *pekio* in a chief's household was always known as *tahu ahi* (fire lighter or guardian). He attended to the fire and did the cooking for the chief and had the first right to the common wife when the true husband was absent. It was the universal rule in both chiefly and other families that *pekio* could cohabit with the wife only when the husband himself was absent. It is doubtful whether there is anything in Krusenstern's belief (16, p. 167) that the main function of the *pekio* was to guard a man's wife during his absence. In a chief's establishment all of the *pekio* lived in a separate house of their own near the dwelling of the chief. It will be seen (in the discussion of betrothal) that if a man or woman lived with another woman or man who had not been the *tuia* or affianced mate this person was called *pekio* even though he or she might be the only actual mate.

Melville and Stewart give interesting evidence as to how the *pekio* relationship sometimes came about. Melville says (23, p. 222):

> The girls are first wooed and won at a very tender age by some stripling in the household in which they reside. This, however, is a mere frolic of the affections, and no formal engagement is contracted. By the time this first love has a little subsided, a second suitor presents himself, of graver years, and carries both boy and girl away to his own habitation. This disinterested and generous-hearted fellow now weds the young couple—marrying damsel and lover at the same time—and all three thenceforth live together as harmoniously as so many turtles.

Stewart supports this as follows (26, p. 317):

> We have yet met with no instance, in any rank of society, of a male with two wives, but are informed that for one woman to have two husbands is a universal habit. Some favourite in the father's household or retinue at an early period becomes the husband of the daughter, who still remains under the paternal roof till contracted

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595 in marriage to a second individual, on which she removes with her first husband to his habitation, and both herself and original companion are supported by him.

It will be seen that this quotation of Stewart's supports what has just been said regarding the *tuia* and the secondary mate.

584. 595 The established relationship between *tuia* and *pekio* was somewhat complicated: A boy (A) and a girl (B) would be betrothed when children, thus becoming *tuia*. When they grew up, the woman might marry another man, who would then be called *ahana pekio* in relationship to both A and B. The affianced man might marry some other woman. She would be *vehine pekio* for both A and B. The two *tuia*, A and B, might never live together, but the man had a right to claim the woman at any time. The two *tuia* might be forced to come together by their relatives who had expended much wealth on the betrothal rites. The first child of the *vehine tuia*, no matter by what father, belonged to the *ahana tuia*, came to live with him, and took the position in his establishment of his first-born, even though the man might have had children already by another woman with whom he was living. The child was called *hamua*, first-born.

When a woman lived with several men at the same time, the first was her *ahana* if neither he nor she had been affianced to anyone; the second to come with her was *ahana pekio*. Similarly, when a man lived with several women, all taken after the first wife were *vehine pekio*.

Formal Betrothal and Marriage Rites

584 The making of *tuia*, or affiancing of offspring, was arranged sometimes before the birth of the children or during their early childhood. The betrothal of children was merely an antecedent stage of the whole process of binding two families or two tribes together by the formal marriage of representatives of each. Formal betrothal was made only between members of two tribes, never within one tribe. The main features of the rites associated with the making of *tuia* consisted in a series of feasts, the giving of presents on the part of both families to each other, and the recitation of their genealogies. In the description of the *pekio* institution, it has been shown already that the *tuia* in many cases never became permanently mated, but that the first child of the *tuia* woman belonged to the *tuia* man and was his first-born, rather than the child born of the woman with whom he had chosen to live. Similarly it was only the man or woman who had been formerly made *tuia* of one's daughter or son whom one called *hunona*.

584 585 The festivals and rites connected with formal betrothal and marriage of two scions of chiefly or wealthy families of different tribes were among the most elaborate of all public festivals in the Marquesas. (See Festivals.)

6: Lisiansky T-5 (1803-1806) 1814 OX6 Marquesas OX6

585 abode with them. The young lovers live together for a while, 1804.
583 on the most intimate footing; and if, at the termination of that May.
period, they still are attached to each other, the marriage is concluded, by their quitting the paternal house, and removing to
[591] one of their own.

595 In rich families, every woman has two husbands; of whom one may be called the assistant husband. This last, when the other is at home, is nothing more than the head servant of the house; but, in case of absence, exercises all the rights of matrimony, and is also obliged to attend his lady wherever she goes. It happens sometimes, that the subordinate partner is chosen after marriage; but in general two men present themselves to the same woman, who, if she approves their addresses, appoints one for the real husband, and the other as his auxiliary: the auxiliary is generally poor, but handsome and well-made.

548 It is no disgrace here, if a woman be brought to bed on the
586 very day of her marriage; the child is still legitimate: indeed there is no such thing known as illegitimacy. Divorces take place with as little ceremony as the nuptial rites are performed.

595 A man may take another wife, and a woman another husband, whenever they find it mutually convenient to do so. Though near relations are forbidden to marry, it sometimes happens, that
588 a father lives with his daughter, and a brother with his sister. Some years ago an instance occurred of a mother cohabiting with her son, but it was regarded with horror; which shows that, even among savages, the rights of maternity are respected above
590 all others. On the birth of a child, the ceremony is observed of

10: Linton E-5 (1920-1921)1939
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619 344 exhibition of food; all around this was a series of platforms which were assigned to the various classes of the population as grandstands. Attached to the regular *tohua* would be, first, the altar platform, which was the seat of the ancestral gods; then a seat for the chief and his immediate family, and after that the platform for the priests, that for the *tuhunga,* and that of the warriors, a large affair having a permanent house which was taboo for women; lastly, there were a platform for women and children, and a big platform for visiting members of other tribes. A new *tohua* was usually built for the eldest son of the chief, an act which raised the status of the chief's family and the tribe.

619 778 [782 784] The tribe also had one or more sacred places in the hills which were used for human sacrifices and for the final disposal of the dead. There were also the sacred place of the fishermen and the great food pits. All this property belonged to the tribe, the fact of tribal membership entitling anyone to its use.

The Household

592 595 The Marquesan household was polyandrous, there being usually two or three men to one woman, while in the household of the chief there might be eleven or twelve men to three or four women, one head wife and subsidiary wives. Well-to-do households would usually add one or even two wives to the establishment some years after the initial marriage of the household head. All members of such a group had sexual rights in each other, the arrangement constituting a sort of group marriage. A chief or head of a rich family would sometimes arrange a marriage with a young woman because she had three or four lovers whom he wished to attach. The men would follow the woman; in this way the family head could build up the man power of his household. Only the poorest households at the lower social levels were monogamous, and there was much envy of rich households by poor ones.

592 Household, rather than family, is the proper term for the basic social unit of Marquesan society. Households were graded

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ity, but socially the child outranked his father from the moment of birth.

The household consisted of the main husband, the wife or wives, and a series of subsidiary husbands. Even with plural wives the men in a household far outnumbered the women. The numerical disparity of the sexes on these islands was puzzling. The Marquesans swore that they did not practice infanticide, yet the ratio of males to females was about two and a half males to one female. It is probable that they did away with the younger girls but kept the practice from cultural notice. The motive for this is hard to ascertain, but it is reasonable to suppose that the group were merely breeding up to their food resources. In good seasons they had more food than population, the surplus being used to fatten pigs; but for bad seasons, when food was scarce, it was necessary to keep the population down by limiting the number of child-bearing women.

The average household consisted then of a household head, a group of other men, and a single wife. The second husband outranked the other subsidiary husbands and took charge of the household in the absence of the head. He also exercised preferential sexual rights with the wife, either with the first husband's permission or during his absence. In the chief's establishment all the husbands would have certain sexual rights with the chief's wife, but when there were a good many husbands, they lived in another house and were called over at the will of either the chief or the wife and rewarded for good service by a night's pleasures. In theory, all members of the household had sexual rights; even servants had access to the head wife if she so wished; actually, the first husband ran things and distributed favors, although it was to his advantage to see that his underlings were sexually satisfied, so that they would work for his house and not wander off with other women.

The household also included the children of the women, either real or adopted, and old people. The Marquesans were perfectly familiar with all the phenomena of physical paternity,

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but they simply did not count it in their social system. Questioned about his parentage, a native would say, "So-and-so is my real father, but the head of my household was Such-and-such, son of—" and go on back through the genealogy of the head. Even in the polyandrous households a woman always knew who the actual father of her child was, and presumably the head of the household also knew, but was not especially concerned about it.

592 595

When a man came into a household, he brought no property except his trees and a few personal possessions, but he shared in the products of the household and worked with the other husbands under the direction of the household head to accumulate wealth to raise the status of the group.

Only younger sons became subsidiary husbands, except in cases where a family was so poor that it could not give its eldest son a good start; he might then attach himself to the household of a chief or a wealthy family. There was no fraternal polyandry, brothers always attaching themselves to different households. A secondary husband could secede if he so wished and join another household. He could even set up a separate establishment of his own if he could accumulate enough wealth for the purpose, but this was difficult since the household head had a claim on his work.

592 554 597 [852]

The first-born child was really a symbol through which the status of the household was raised. A series of ceremonies was held in his honor from birth on, the size and expense of these ceremonies determining the prestige of the household. Adoption of a child from another household to take the place of the first-born, if there was no son, was a very expensive proceeding, involving a large exchange of household goods and pigs and the giving of feasts. Adoption of a first-born really fused two households into one, a fact which raised the prestige of the eldest child and, through him, of the group backing him.

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The formal betrothal and marriage of the first-born with a mate from another household entailed still more elaborate property exchanges. It is interesting to note in this connection

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554 even within the tribe, a family strong in man power could in
584 such affairs triumph over a weaker household. Consequently
592 the household welcomed a new man. The man's attachment to the household was voluntary, and persuasion was required to win his allegiance. The wife was very definitely held out as a lure to attract men to the household, so that the household head sought to get a woman who was beautiful and sexually desirable. Only the eldest son had rights in the household into which he was born; a younger son had to attach himself to some other household, and naturally went to the one where the woman was most attractive to him. The handsomest and most sexually skillful girls were sought in marriage by eldest sons, for the sexual attraction of the women promoted the prestige and power of the household.

562 The head of the household had authority as an organizer but as he was socially outranked by his eldest son from birth, he
592 could not prevent secondary husbands from leaving at any time
595 that they considered themselves ill-used. The effective power lay in the hands of the woman, since by the distribution of sexual favors she controlled not only the head husband but all the subsidiary husbands. In the ordinary household, where the head had simply picked a woman without formal ritual or gift exchange, she could leave at any time she wished. The wife made practically no direct economic contribution to the household. Her job was to please the husbands. After a woman had passed active sexual age, she would take up certain simple manufacturies. The woman who was herself the eldest child had a most enviable position. She owned the establishment and ruled openly, calling husbands at will and dismissing them if they displeased her. The head husband in such cases was merely the wife's deputy, who ordered the household according to her wish and direction.

858 Very little authority was exercised over children, and practically none over the eldest who, as has been explained, outranked the parents. These infant family heads could do practically anything they pleased. In the valley of Puamau, I

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while married ones might. Thus if a woman's main husband appeared too interested in another woman she would first threaten suicide, and then, in many cases, carry out her threat. Her death would not bring the vengeance of her family on the husband, but it would grieve him, bring public censure, and also break up the household. The secondary husbands would leave and he would have to attach himself to another household in a subsidiary position. How far these practices are to be interpreted as expressions of jealousy is a question. The main factor seems to have been wounded pride.

After marriage there was little if any overt expression of jealousy on the part of the men. It must be remembered that the household was normally made up of a girl and a group of boys from her gang who were particularly attached to her and to each other. Jealousy between plural husbands or even between married men over some woman outside their households was considered very bad manners. Such men never quarreled over women when sober, but when drunk there were numerous fights, some quite serious, when knives were used. The participants were much humiliated when they became sober, and there would be an exchange of apologies the next day. In a well established household there was no quarreling over the wife.

There were various forms of marriages, the most formal being that between the eldest son of the chief of one tribe and the eldest daughter of the chief of another tribe, a union which would unite two lines and promote peace between the two groups. The betrothal in these cases was made in infancy, and during the period of the engagement feasts given by one family or the other. The marriage was an elaborate ceremony with extensive gift exchanges. The group who went to the neighboring village to get the bride carried live pigs lashed to a tremendous timber frame. This delegation would be attacked by the men of the receiving group, who would attempt to drive them off and carry away the pigs. Later there would be a return ceremony with another offering of pigs.

Only a household well up in the social scale could afford a

/62 cont./ The 586
dissolution of a legal marriage entails much more difficulty, 197
however, usually resulting in the defecting member leaving 797
the immediate locale, perhaps to take up residence in a distant valley, preferably one not served by the missionary who officiated at the marriage. In such cases, property division may become quite difficult, due to missionary intervention [648]
preventing divorce and stringent French laws regarding apportionment of property.

There are a variety of socially acceptable, institutionalized 595
ways of extending marital sexual prerogatives beyond the [183]
realm of the nuclear family. One of these, polygamy, is found infrequently at present, although both historical and ethnographic sources indicate that it was most common in the past. Polygyny was definitely noted in one instance, in which a male had three wives: two informal unions and a final legal union. The wives remained in separate houses while the legal mate, a /63/ younger girl, resided with the husband. This case was rather well-known to the natives but scrupulously hidden from the missionaries. The support of three wives, a heavy burden for most, was made possible in this case by the wealth of the husband who owned an entire valley, in which a group of quasi-slave tenant workers and [466]
relatives labored. Several other apparently polygynous unions were observed; but no definite information could be obtained, due to the native's fear of exposure to French government and mission authorities.

Polyandry is not found at present in the Marquesas, in [178]
the form in which it previously existed in the aboriginal culture. That is, only the promiscuous girls cohabit simultaneously with more than one husband. The typical pattern is monogamous cohabitation.

Sexual hospitality is still in evidence, although in 554
much diminished frequency from the aboriginal condition. 837
It is a privilege extended to friends and people of prestige for the purpose of placing a reciprocal obligation, raising the prestige of the lesser of the husbands involved. During the early months of our 1957 visit to Nuku Hiva, we received three invitations to participate in such relationships. [123]

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The aboriginal pattern of free heterosexual experimentation during adolescence has survived to the present with relatively little modification, except that the introduction of French law and the dissemination of popular knowledge concerning penalties for rape, etc., has added new dangers to those already existing for the couples caught en flagrante.

Marriage

The most common form of "marriage" in the past was of an informal nature, the couple merely deciding to settle down together as the result of mutual attraction, the birth of a child, etc. (Handy 1923, p. 101). Formal betrothal and marriage only occurred between individuals of consequence in the society and were surrounded with very costly festivals (ibid., pp. 102, 209-211). Informal unions are still the most common, probably because of the ease of the arrangement and the fact that it does not require a great expense such as would be necessary if the union were to be formalized by the state or church, thus requiring a feast of at least modest dimensions.

The presence of the French government as well as the Catholic mission and the pressure which these organizations have brought to bear has nearly extinguished polygamy in the Marquesas. Formerly, both polygyny and polyandry of a sort were permitted, although monogamy was probably the most common marital state in thewhole population. Secondary mates (pekio) were taken, often as a means of establishing peaceful relations /111/ between warring valleys; such relationships were also entered into as a means of building household strength for political moves. Secondary mates were also taken for reasons of less weight than those just noted. Often betrothal for a relationship of this type was made for children. Upon growing up, the privilege obtained by virtue of the childhood betrothal might not be claimed (Handy 1923, pp. 101-102). In this context of secondary mate relationships occurred the polyandry about which considerable has been written in Marquesan culture. Polyandry was most common in families of chiefs, wherein large numbers of males were needed to perform the duties which

/111 cont./

fell to the lot of the chief. It was common for a chief to use his wife's sexual propensities as a means for attracting valuable warriors or retainers into his household, and holding them with him. The institution of polyandry was not a result of the numerical inferiority of women as has been claimed, however (see Linton, Handy, p. 101), as the census records discussed above clearly show that such a preponderance of males never occurred in the time for which records are available.

According to Gracia, polygyny was rare, even among chiefly families. This reliable source states that he saw only one individual with two wives; a paramount chief of the island of Ua Pou who held a position of such high prestige that he was deified soon after his death.

Despite the presence of the secondary mate institution, it is interesting to note that the state of monogamy is /112/ depicted most frequently in legends (Handy).

Extramarital relations of a casual sort appear to have been as much a feature of aboriginal culture as they are in modern times. Legends contain numerous references to such relations, and statements of informants indicate that the modern situation is quite representative of the former state of the culture, at least as far back as the last decade of the nineteenth century.

Beating of unfaithful wives as practiced today was also known in aboriginal times, often being carried to the point of death of the miscreant (Handy 1923, p. 100). Another form of expression of sexual jealousy -- suicide -- which was often used by women in the past, is no longer found in Marquesan culture. This is probably due to the strong negative sanctions applied by the Catholic church against this action.

Summary

In the preceding discussion comparisons have been made between modern Marquesan sexual behavior and the sexual behavior as reported by historical sources and ethnographers, in an attempt to reconstruct aboriginal practices and trace the dynamics of this behavior over the